

NPL Site Narrative for Cherokee County

CHEROKEE COUNTY Cherokee County, Kansas

Federal Register Notice: [September 8, 1983](#)

Conditions at listing (December 1982): The Cherokee County site is a mining area covering about 410 square miles in Cherokee County, Kansas. It is part of a larger area sometimes referred to as the Tri-State Mining District, which encompasses Cherokee County, Jasper County in Missouri, and Ottawa County in Oklahoma. As a result of extensive lead and zinc mining and related activities covering almost 100 years, huge tailings piles cover an estimated 4,000 acres in southern Cherokee County alone. The tailings contain small amounts of lead, zinc, cadmium, and asbestos. Acidic water in abandoned mine shafts in the area contains high concentrations of toxic metals, particularly lead and cadmium. This mine water surfaces in Tar Creek in Oklahoma.

In 1981, following a report by the University of Kansas School of Medicine indicating an unusually high incidence of cancer, particularly lung cancer, in Cherokee and Jasper Counties, EPA performed a background study over the Tri-State area to identify potential carcinogens. An EPA aerial photographic study of Cherokee County in October 1982 indicates that the piles are susceptible to water erosion, with the run-off going to nearby streams.

This site was first listed under the name "Tar Creek, Cherokee

County."

Status (July 1983): EPA has authorized a Remedial Action Master Plan outlining the investigations needed to determine the full extent of cleanup required at the site. Under a Cooperative Agreement with EPA, Oklahoma is studying water quality problems in Ottawa County, Oklahoma. Also, Kansas, using state funds, has begun a study of air quality in southeastern Cherokee County.

In April 1983, the Centers for Disease Control issued a health advisory recommending permanent relocation of 11 families on or near the site. EPA then allocated \$2.2 million to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the relocation.

[The description of the site (release) is based on information available at the time the site was evaluated with the HRS. The description may change as additional information is gathered on the sources and extent of contamination. See [56 FR 5600](#), February 11, 1991, or subsequent FR notices.]